

THEY SAID IT

Branstad touts tax plan in Marshalltown



Gov. Terry Branstad talks about his proposal plan for permanent property tax relief at Legends American Grill Wednesday night. The governor's plan would save taxpayers \$1.2 billion over eight years.

By DAVID ALEXANDER
TIMES REPUBLICAN

Gov. Terry Branstad lauded his new plan for permanent property tax relief Wednesday night during a town hall meeting.

Before a small group of roughly 45 people at Legends American Grill, 2902 S. Center St., the governor spoke on why he thought his plan was superior to the Democratic Senate plan to reduce property taxes over the next eight years.

"Everyone knows property taxes are generally too high," Branstad said. "Our plan offers permanent relief."

Under the governor's plan, Iowa taxpayers would save \$1.2 billion over that period, as well treating commercial and residential property as well as new and existing taxes the same, he said.

Many businesses face exor-

bitant property taxes, he said. That needs to stop.

Although the governor's plan does not make Iowa immune to property tax increases, it does attempt to limit the degree to which they increase.

"I think we have the pathway to get significant permanent property tax relief this year," he said.

The governor said he is willing to work with the Democratic Senate to reach a compromise. He said if it will support an increase for the earned income tax credit, even though he previously vetoed such an increase.

Branstad said his plan would match local governments dollar for dollar, and would ensure tax credits will come through by utilizing a five-year budget plan that earmarks that money. Each year,

that plan would be re-evaluated for the subsequent five years.

"We are going to see that local governments are protected," he said. "There will be no loss to local governments."

During the open forum portion of the town hall meeting, several employees and others lobbying on behalf of the employees of the Iowa Veterans Home inquired when that facility would return state benefits to several groups of contracted employees.

The governor said that a return to such a policy simply isn't fiscally prudent, and if anything, he believes all state employees, which includes him, should pay at least 20 percent of their medical insurance.

"We got to do what's fair and right," he said.

Attorney and former state

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The Marshalltown Times-Republican, Feb. 23, 2012

"The Branstad-Reynolds plan saves Iowa taxpayers about \$1.2 billion in property taxes over the next eight years. Residential taxpayers save \$606 million; commercial, industrial and railroad taxpayers save \$347 million; and agricultural taxpayers save \$226 million" - *The Oskaloosa Herald*, February 21, 2012

"I think the governor made a great case for permanent property tax reform. I think they got it." - Former State Senator Larry McKibben, February 23, 2012

"For the past 30 years, state lawmakers have talked about property tax reform but done nothing about it. However, Gov. Terry Branstad and Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds have an eight-year plan to reform the state's property tax system." - *The Oskaloosa Herald*, February 21, 2012.

"In pitching his plan to Newton residents, the governor said his plan would reduce commercial tax collections by \$347 million, \$226 million in agriculture and \$606 million in residential collections during its 8-year period." - *The Newton Daily News*, February 23, 2012

"If nothing is done to address our *uncompetitive* property tax system, Iowans will experience a \$2.5 billion property tax increase over the next 10 years, with the majority of that falling to homeowners." - Sen. Pat Ward R-West Des Moines, *The West Des Moines Register*, February 21, 2012

"This issue (commercial property taxes) is a huge problem for commercial businesses as they currently pay 100% of assessed value." - *Iowa Grocer*, Legislative Issue 2012

"Iowa has waited way too long while other states have passed bold and significant initiatives. We haven't and we're paying a price for that." – Gov. Branstad, weekly news conference, February 28, 2012

"But it is time for Iowa to take a stand on this issue. **This state can no longer tolerate allowing thousands of our young people to be illiterate.** Dramatic action must be taken. That includes not allowing students who cannot read to simply advance to the next grade level year after year." – *The Des Moines Register*, February 23, 2012.

"**Sixty-one percent of respondents** in an Iowa Poll released this week said that mandated **yearly evaluations would make a major difference in raising the quality of education** in the state." – *The Des Moines Register*, February 23, 2012.

"The benefit (of annual reviews) for teachers is that it **helps their teaching improve**. The benefit for students is that **they have better teachers**, and I don't think that really needs a defense." – Charlotte Danielson, New Jersey-based education consultant, *The Des Moines Register*, February 23, 2012.

"*We're not competing effectively for the really great jobs for the future if we don't have good education.* We need to make sure we are **preparing our students for those jobs** and that we have demanding and rigorous standards, that we have effective assessments aligned with it and we have a good evaluation system..." – Gov. Branstad, weekly news conference, February 28, 2012